

Matthew 5:1-12 | “#Blessed”
Preached on May 7, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5, and we will be covering verses 1-12 today. *[pause]*

We have been looking at discipleship in the book of Matthew.

We saw who we follow - it's the one and only promised King and Messiah, Jesus Christ.

We then saw what a disciple is and we found that a disciple is a follower of Christ, who Christ makes into a fisher of men. [pause]

Now as we move on into the Beatitudes today, we will see the foundational marks of a disciple.

And let me tell you: grasping, believing, and living in light of the Beatitudes is such an important thing.

The more you study them, the more you realize how much of what He says later kind of flows out of these truths and values.

It's like He's laying the foundation to show us the values and marks of a disciple.

Let's READ THE PASSAGE. *[READ]*

According to our American culture, who are the people who are blessed?

If we were honest, this is probably what the American Beatitudes would sound like...

Blessed are the rich, who don't have to worry about money problems.

Blessed are those with good health.

Blessed are you when you succeed and “win” in every area of your life, like a boss.

Blessed are those who get to live in comfort, and don't have many trials or hardships.

Blessed are those who are well-liked, popular, and approved by others. [pauseeee]

Little do we realize how influenced we are by these American Beatitudes!

You ever look at someone who has some of those things and think, “Wow, they are blessed. They have it made. They have the ‘good life’.”? [pause]

Why do you think there's so much depression in relation to social media?

Because people look at others who make it appear like they are so happy and have it good, and then when they look at their own lives, they feel like a failure.

They think, “Just look at that person that is so blessed, and yet look at my life.” *[pause]*

Little do we realize how much our thinking has been influenced by these American Beatitudes, for also, consider what we pursue.

Do you ever think that your life would just be so much better and more blessed if you had more money, more experiences, more comfort, more people liking you, or better health? *[pause]*

Our thinking and values have been molded into the likeness of the American Beatitudes, but little do we realize how *antithetical* they are to Christ's Beatitudes.

Because in many ways, what Christ says is the polar opposite of that thinking. *[pauseeee]*

So think of those American Beatitudes and then listen to some of Christ's...

Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and even those persecuted.

Are those traits that Americans typically aspire to?

Anyone ever look at someone who mourns and say, "That person's blessed." *[pause]*

What about the poor in spirit, meek, and persecuted?

Is that the people that we inherently think of as blessed, and having the good life? *[pause]*

Yet that's what Jesus says!

That's because Christ's ways and kingdom values are counter-cultural to the kingdoms of this world.

He flips everything that we typically think on its head. *[pauseeee]*

While our culture often deems the poor in spirit, mournful over sin, meek, and persecuted for Christ as the wimps and losers of society, Jesus is showing us that they are the very ones who are blessed in God's eyes. *[pauseeee]*

You see, the Beatitudes are extremely *paradoxical*.

These statements seem contradictory and even absurd, for it's like it's saying, "Happy are the mournful."

Really? Those who are unhappy are happy? Those going through hard times are blessed? *[pause]*

What king says this about those in his kingdom?...

"Just so you know, guys, in my kingdom, the people blessed will be the poor in spirit and mournful."

People would probably think, "Those are the *blessed* people?"

If you want to lose a following, you say that.

But that's the truth - the kingdom of heaven is very different from the kingdoms of this world.
[pauseeee]

God's kingdom doesn't belong to the rich, mighty, and self-assertive.

Those are the types of people that our world looks to and admires, but God has a different set of values. *[pauseeeee]*

So let's look closer at what Jesus says, and what we will discover is that...

Christ's disciples are people who are blessed.

A thing nowadays on social media is to write a status or put up a picture and to type "#blessed".

It has been used when someone posts a picture of themselves at the beach, or when they wear expensive clothing.

It has been used when someone relaxes on vacation, or gets a new boyfriend.

It's now used for almost anything and everything.

And because the word 'blessed' is used so profusely in our culture for almost everything, it's kind of muddied the waters as to what truly being blessed means.

But Jesus makes it clear *who* is actually blessed. *[pauseeee]*

Now what does Jesus mean by 'blessed'?

It means that this person has the true good life, for they have divine favor from God.

They are in an extremely good state in life. *[pause]*

It doesn't necessarily mean that you are happy all the time, but rather points more towards your blessed state.

This person is blessed because they are a recipient of divine favor and receive great blessings from God.

That's why it says, "Blessed are those who...for..." and then gives a reason for their blessed state. *[pauseeee]*

This is the true good life.

The world may try to say that others have the good life, and you may look at other people's lives and think that they are blessed, but God shows us the reality.

True blessedness is always what God says, and not what man claims. *[pauseeeee]*

Our culture usually doesn't say that Christians are the blessed ones, but Christians are becoming more and more the despised ones.

We are often people who the world deems as low and not blessed for we aren't the strong, mighty, rich, and bold, but according to God, we are truly the blessed.

So it shouldn't matter how the world views us, but what matters is what God says. [pauseeee]

That means that even if you are going through the hardest times of life, even if you have no money, even if you are mournful, even if the world deems you the lowest of the low...

...As a follower of Christ, you can say, "I am blessed."

Not because of my riches, not because tons of people like me, not because I have power in my position, but because Christ has declaratively stated that I am blessed. *[pauseeee]*

I will struggle now, others will look down upon me, and think that I'm not blessed, but Christ says that even NOW I am blessed.

He didn't say, "Blessed will be," but "Blessed are."

And this blessedness is because of the Lord, who graciously gives us infinitely more than we deserve. [pauseeee]

So Christ's disciples are people who are blessed.

It's not because we are amazing in and of ourselves, for we are people "poor in spirit" and who are ultimately needy...

...But rather, the reason is because we have a relationship with God, who gives us and promises us amazing blessings. [pauseeee]

So what are the characteristics of those who are blessed?...

I. They are people who are humble and God-dependent. (1-5)

In order to see this humility and God-dependence, let's take the first 3 beatitudes one-by-one.

First, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [pause]

That's kind of odd sounding, isn't it?

The poor are blessed?

Usually people don't think of the poor as being blessed, yet Jesus says that the poor in spirit are blessed. *[pause]*

What's important to realize is that this isn't the economically poor, this is the *spiritually* poor.
[pause]

The word for 'poor' here means having absolutely nothing.

Think of a poor person: they have nothing, and they recognize that they have nothing, and must depend on others for everything.

So to be poor in spirit means that you humbly recognize that there's nothing that you can do to save yourself, and you admit your spiritual need.

You admit that all of your works before Christ are filthy rags.¹ *[pause]*

This is opposite of the Pharisees, who in their pride, thought they were big deals spiritually.

They didn't see their need for Christ, for they didn't recognize their spiritual poverty.

But in humility, we must admit that we need help, and we need God, for He is our only hope.
[pause]

This is basically humble dependence, which is the opposite of pride and independence.
[pauseeee]

This is counter-cultural in our world because our world values independence and self-reliance.

Our world says, "You are enough. You have everything you need. You can be whatever you want to be," but that is the opposite of being poor in spirit!

We must keep pushing off the tendency in ourselves to be independent and self-sufficient, and instead say, "I need Christ!" *[pauseeee]*

It's the heart cry of saying, "Lord, I can't save myself. I am poor spiritually. I am a blind, miserable, and wretched sinner. So Lord, I utterly depend on Christ alone." *[pauseeeee]*

It is to these people, who admit their spiritual poverty and run to God for help, who belong to the Kingdom, and who are God's people.

For Jesus says of such people, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." *[pause]*

So while our culture may say the independent go-getters are the blessed, God says that it's the people who recognize they have absolutely nothing in themselves, who are blessed. *[pauseeee]*

Do you humbly recognize your spiritual need, or have you been trying to trust in yourself and your works?

¹ A reference to Isaiah 64:6.

Root out any vestiges of pride in your life, drop to your knees, and daily admit your dependence on the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

Right from the start, we see that the whole Beatitudes are foundationally based on God's grace because these blessed people are nothing in themselves.

And they acknowledge that everything they are and do is from God alone. *[pauseeee]*

Next, we see that those who mourn are blessed, for Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." *[pause]*

The mournful are blessed? Who says that?

Usually when we see someone mourning, we don't think, "Now that guy is blessed!"

So what does Jesus mean? *[pause]*

I believe that this points primarily to those who mourn the sin in their own lives, mourn the sin of the world, and mourn under the duress of persecution.

But why would God say that people like that are blessed?

Because such people in their sorrow and in their need, go to God for comfort.

They are brokenhearted over their sin, over the sin of the world, and over persecution, but they know that God is near to the brokenhearted.² *[pauseeee]*

You see godly grief doesn't lead you to run away from God, but to turn to Him in your sorrow.³

You go into the arms of the Father, and He brings comfort.

That person is truly blessed, for they have once again recognized their need and have gone to the one and only place that brings comfort - the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever mourned over your sin?

Our world may joke about sin, but we sorrow over it because we know what it is (rebellion) and what it leads to (destruction).

And our sorrow doesn't lead us to despair, or to departure from the Lord, but it leads us into the arms of the Savior. *[pause]*

Take all of your tears to the Lord!

² A reference to Psalm 34:18.

³ See 2 Corinthians 7:8-9.

He gives you comfort now, and He will give you complete comfort when Christ comes again, for He will wipe away every tear from your eyes.⁴ *[pauseeeeeee]*

The meek are also blessed, “for they shall inherit the earth.” *[pause]*

How often is meekness trumpeted in our world?

No one typically says, “I want to be meek!” because they seem like people who just get walked over and are seen as weak. *[pause]*

Instead, what is lifted up in our culture as something to aspire to?

Usually it’s the people who are aggressive and produce.

It’s the people who steam-roll over others, who are assertive, and strive to “take what’s theirs”.

They are seen as the “successful” businessmen and businesswomen of our world.

Yet is that how Christians ought to act? *[pause]*

Are we to be brash and self-assertive?

Are we to steam-roll others in our way?

Are we to throw people under the bus, while we keep on driving through?

No, for Jesus says that the meek are the blessed. *[pauseeeee]*

To be meek is to be gentle, kind, and humble.

It’s the opposite of bold, brash, boastful, and having selfish ambition. *[pauseeeee]*

What’s the promise for the meek? “They shall inherit the earth.”

Isn’t that interesting.

Those who will inherit the earth don’t get it by military or political power, but by a simple trust in God for it.

They don’t seek to gain the earth themselves by their aggressive brashness, but leave it in God’s hands. *[pauseeee]*

In the kingdoms of this world, it’s the mighty, self-trusting, self-assertive who dominate and conquer, but not in God’s kingdom.

In God’s kingdom, the meek receive the earth, which points us to how Jesus will come again, and we will reign with him on the earth. *[pauseeeee]*

⁴ A reference to Revelation 21:4.

As we reflect upon these three: poor in spirit, those who mourn, and the meek, we see that they all involve humility and God-dependence.

That's what God values and cherishes.

So pride has no place in our lives; self-dependence and a mentality of independence is in opposition to God.

So fall to your knees, and recognize that in yourself you have nothing of spiritual significance, but only through Christ.

Mourn over your sin, and draw near to God.

And meekly trust Him and follow His leading. *[pauseee]*

As Christians, we never graduate past humility or God-dependence, but it's to be our life-long disposition.

So seek to cultivate these things in your life even more as you follow Christ in humble dependence. *[pauseeeee]*

So the first half of the Beatitudes seem to be talking about our inner attitudes and dispositions, especially as we relate to God.

Now the remaining ones appear to be focusing on how we relate to and treat others.

And in them, we see some more characteristics of Christ's disciples...

III. They are people who pursue and practice righteousness. (6-12)

These latter Beatitudes all revolve around righteousness, which is adhering to what's right according to God. *[pause]*

We first see that they long for righteousness.

Jesus says in verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." *[pause]*

For most of us, we feel hunger and thirst, but not like someone who has gone days and days without food or water.

Yet for someone like that, it's an extreme longing, a strong, compelling desire, an intense yearning for food and water.

That's how Christ followers are described in relation to righteousness.

So we don't just mourn over sin, but we long for righteousness. *[pauseeeee]*

Someone who turns to Christ is someone who has admitted their spiritual poverty, mourned and turned away from their sin, and longs for the righteousness that only Christ can provide through faith.

And God gives it to that person!

Not by their meriting it, but He credits Christ's righteousness to their account, and they are satisfied. *[pause]*

So this hungering and thirsting for righteousness happens at salvation, but it should characterize our whole lives.

Christ followers always long for what's right.

They have a passion for what's right and an intense desire for goodness. *[pause]*

So many others long for fleshly pleasures, sin, and the like.

Those without Christ are looking and pursuing what's wrong and against God, and looking for ways to twist and morph morality to be what they want.

They want approval of their wicked deeds, so that they feel better about themselves, but the disciple of Jesus strongly desires to obey and do what's right. *[pause]*

The disciple of Jesus says, "I want to do what God deems as right, and I want to avoid whatever goes against what He says."

They aren't trying to find loopholes to get away with wrong, but they are looking for aids to help them do what's right. *[pauseeee]*

You see, our world says, "Pursue what you want! What's right and wrong is what's right and wrong to you!"

But the Christian pursues what God says is right. *[pause]*

They aren't content with partial righteousness, but complete righteousness, for they hunger and thirst after it.

So no matter what strides they make in holiness, even the smallest glimpse of sin in their lives is put to death, and a desire for more holiness is striven for. *[pause]*

This is why a love for and a striving after holiness is a tell-tale sign of being a true Christian.

Yes, you still sin and fail, but do you strongly desire, long for, and want to follow and obey Christ? *[pauseeee]*

Sadly, there are those who name the name of Christ, who don't hunger and thirst for righteousness.

They don't care to uphold what God says, but approve of those who directly go against His righteousness.

They aren't longing for righteousness, but following after their own passions. *[pauseeee]*

You see, a true disciple hungers and thirsts for righteousness in their own lives, but they also hunger and thirst for it in society.

It breaks their heart to see a society in active rebellion against God, and they long for righteousness to prevail.

They long, oh do they long for the final day when God will make all things right.

And it is these people who are blessed, for their hunger and thirst will be satisfied. *[pauseeeee]*

That longing for your life to be in accordance with God's commands will be satisfied someday when Christ comes back and gives you a glorified body, free of sin.

That longing for the world to be made right will be satisfied someday when Christ comes again and makes all things right.

Yes! Our longings will be satisfied!

Righteousness will prevail and pervade the whole world because God will make it happen!

He won't leave us in our hunger and thirst, but He will satisfy our longing. *[pauseeeeeee]*

Not only does a disciple of Christ long for righteousness, but they live out righteousness.

Just look, for Jesus says, "Blessed are the...merciful...pure in heart...and peacemakers." *[pause]*

Christ's disciples display God's character in the world.

As God is merciful, so they are merciful.

As God is pure, so their hearts are pure.

As God is a God of peace, so they are peacemakers. *[pauseeeee]*

To be merciful is to have compassion, pity, and leniency on others.

The key to being merciful is realizing how much mercy we have received from the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

Our world is about revenge, and the call to "get them back for what they did to you!" is strong.

Yet we extend mercy because we are to be like God, who extends mercy to the undeserving, and we will someday receive mercy on the final day. *[pauseeee]*

We are to also be ‘pure in heart’.

It means that we should be people who genuinely and sincerely want to follow Him and do things out of our hearts. *[pause]*

So often we focus on the outward, instead of the heart, yet Christ is concerned with our hearts! *[pauseeee]*

The opposite of being pure in heart is to be a hypocrite, put on an outward show while your heart is not genuinely into it.

The Pharisees would be the prime example of those who were not pure in heart, for they were white-washed tombs.⁵

We are not to be like them, but we are to have pure hearts, who genuinely, out of our hearts, do what’s right. *[pauseeee]*

It’s those with pure hearts who will someday see Him in all of His glory.

And it’s only the pure in heart, for only those who are pure can stand before God. *[pause]*

I’m thankful for Christ’s work on my behalf, who has made me pure before God, and will someday give me a glorified body, free of all impurity! *[pauseeee]*

The peacemakers are also blessed.

And as peacemakers, we reflect the great Peacemaker and Reconciler, and that’s why we will be called sons of God. *[pause]*

We, as well as others, are not always so good at peacemaking.

Sometimes we want to cut people out of our lives, or provoke others to anger.

But we are to be the peacemakers of the world, determined to bring reconciliation in relationships. *[pause]*

The thing with peacemaking is it’s messy, but it’s beautiful.

You’ll have to walk into messy situations, filled with anger and hurt, but when you are able to help people reconcile -- what a beautiful thing! *[pauseeee]*

Are your past and current relationships characterized more by division or by reconciliation?

Are you willing to step into hard situations and help bring peace to broken relationships? *[pause]*

⁵ A reference to Matthew 23:27.

We do this because we remember that that's how God works, He seeks to bring reconciliation and peace, and has done it especially for us through Christ. *[pauseeee]*

These characteristics are to mark our lives, but often we find that we don't always live these ways consistently.

One commentator told the story of how, "There was a sign on a convent wall in Baltimore, Maryland that read, 'SISTERS OF MERCY: Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.'"⁶ *[pause]*

How many times as Christians does what we are supposed to be not line up with how we treat others?

Sometimes we aren't the most merciful people, but we seek out revenge.

Sometimes our hearts aren't pure in heart, but we simply put on an outward show of religion.

And sometimes we aren't peacemakers, but people who bring forth division and rivalry.

May we repent of our sin, mourn it, recognize that we need the Lord, and ask Him to help us cultivate these qualities more. *[pauseeee]*

Lastly, "blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." *[pause]*

We are people who not only long for what's right, and display what's right in our lives, but we will face persecution for doing so. *[pause]*

The world is in rebellion against God and doesn't want righteousness to prevail, so we will be victims of persecution for righteousness' sake.

We will be reviled, and people will utter all kinds of evil against us falsely on account of Christ, yet we are blessed.

Why? Because we are doing what's right, just like the prophets of old.

And God won't ignore what we go through, but rewards our faithfulness through it all. *[pauseeee]*

Though the world hates us, reviles us, and calls us the scum of the earth - we are blessed, and no one can touch that state of blessing.

Even persecution can't change the fact that as Christ followers we are truly blessed, and what matters is how God views us.

For in the end, the truth will prevail.

⁶ Jay E. Adams, *The Gospels of Matthew and Mark, The Christian Counselor's Commentary* (Cordova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 35.

God's Kingdom will come and we will be recipients of God's gracious eternal blessings, which He has promised those who trust in Christ. *[pauseeee]*

The Beatitudes are Christ's definitive word on who is truly blessed.

It's not the mighty, rich, popular, and powerful of this world, like many people think.

Rather, it's those who recognize their spiritual poverty, and humbly depend on God for everything.

It's those who say, "I am nothing, but Christ is all."

And it's those who seek to live with Christ as King, and who desire to display His righteousness in their own lives. *[pause]*

If you have never trusted in Jesus Christ, may you recognize your spiritual poverty and turn in faith to Him.

And if you have, let's humbly rely upon God to cultivate these characteristics in our lives, and look with hope-filled anticipation to His precious promises.